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Immediate Release

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**Environment Department Orders New Election, Open Meeting Training for East Mountain Community Sewage Association**

(Santa Fe, NM) –New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Secretary Ron Curry has ordered a new election and training on the New Mexico Open Meetings Act for the Board of Directors of the Paa-ko Communities Sewer Association. This order resolves issues raised in a hearing held on May 10, 2005 at the Vista Grande Community Center.

This hearing was held to investigate allegations surrounding the management of the Paa-ko Communities Sewage Association. Paa-ko Communities, developed by Roger Cox and affiliates, is located in Sandia Park on the east side of the Sandia Mountains.

At the hearing evidence was presented that certain board members are ineligible for their positions, and that the board has not made meetings sufficiently accessible to the public.

Following the hearing Secretary Curry determined that three members of the board (Roger Cox, Nick Thompson and Bruce Franks) do not appear to be bona fide landowners within the association and are therefore ineligible for their seats. The Secretary also found that the board had violated the Open Meetings Act on numerous occasions and that holding board and association meetings in Albuquerque resulted in meetings that were not sufficiently accessible to association members.

To resolve these issues the Secretary has ordered that the association hold a new election for the seats currently held by Cox, Thompson and Franks by October 31, 2005, and that this election be held according to all applicable requirements of the Open Meetings Act and association bylaws. The Secretary has also ordered that all future meetings of the board and association be held at or near the Paa-ko Communities, and that all members of the board participate in training on the requirements of the Open Meetings Act.

“Free and open access to governing bodies is the right of every New Mexican,” said Secretary Curry. “This is as true for state government as it is for the smallest water and sewer association. I hope that this case shows that NMED is committed to transparency both internally and in the organizations we regulate.”

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State law empowers NMED to “intervene in the operation and management with full powers” if it determines that a sanitary project is not being operated or managed in the best interests of local citizens.

For further information, please contact Jon Goldstein, NMED Communication Director at (505) 827-0314.

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